

Israelis, Falangists Plot Invasion of Lebanon

On Aug. 22 the U.S. Armed Forces Network (AFN) reported that Prime Minister Menachem Begin, Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, Chief of Staff Rafael Eytan and a "high ranking official of the Lebanese right" met in Begin's home to discuss the situation in Lebanon.

Two days later the *Chicago Tribune* reported that the "high Lebanese official" was none other than National Liberal Party leader and fascist sympathizer Camille Chamoun, an advocate of a separate Israeli-backed Christian state.

Although the *Chicago Tribune* and certain other press claim that the meeting revolved around a discussion of the plight of the Christians in East Beirut and Mount Lebanon — and the "danger of an imminent Syrian attack" — it is more likely that Begin and company discussed the nuts and bolts of an Israeli strike into Lebanon which would aim specifically at crushing the 30,000-man Syrian peace-keeping force stationed in the Beirut area since the end of the Lebanese civil war.

The Israeli goal, according to numerous sources, is to provoke a Middle East war in the remaining weeks before the Sept. 5 Camp David summit on the Middle East. Such an Israeli strike at Syrian forces would trigger a confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact forces. The Soviet Union, which has recently put Syria under its nuclear umbrella, has made it public that any threat to the sovereignty of Syria is a direct threat to the Soviet Union's sphere of influence.

According to AFN, immediately after the meeting the Israeli Air Force began extensive air reconnaissance of Lebanon. The overflights, illegal under international law, came two days after Israeli jets bombed and strafed two Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut.

The Soviet Union, through a Tass news release, has evaluated this provocation as tantamount to war and warned that an "invasion of Lebanon cannot be excluded."

In Europe, several sources expressed grave concern over the threat of a Middle East war on the eve of the Camp David talks. French intelligence sources warned that Israel is seeking to explode the situation in Lebanon by early September, and similar warnings

were carried by two Italian dailies, *L'Unita* and *La Stampa*. *La Stampa* reported that Washington was so worried that they dispatched State Department Special Envoy Roy Atherton to visit Cairo and Tel Aviv to urge restraint.

Still, Israeli intelligence is known to be planning a terrorist pretext for an attack into Lebanon, along the lines of the armed assault on the El Al airport bus in London on Aug. 20.

Following on the heels of the London incident, Israel announced a nationwide mobilization to prepare for a terrorist spree including a "mock alert" and practice of the entire Israeli military, police and secret services in a counterterror dry run. Transport Minister and former Chief of Intelligence Meir Amit has said that Israel has "information" that "Palestinians are planning to destroy the Camp David summit by terrorism."

According to the *Christian Science Monitor* of Aug. 22, the Lebanese government has issued a strong statement chiding the United States for allowing the situation in Lebanon to deteriorate by not using its diplomatic muscle to keep the Israeli government in check.

Camp David Fears

The intended Israeli assault to fragment Camp David comes at a time when the Israelis know that despite the Mondale-Brzezinski "separate peace faction" fancy diplomacy inside the U.S., and Begin's talk of a "permanent partial peace," the U.S. cannot force Egypt's Sadat to accept a separate peace treaty that shuts out the other Arab states and the Palestinians. A report from the Aug. 23 *Financial Times* indicates how Saudi Arabia, the financial backer of Sadat, is looking at the Camp David summit: "Saudi officials pointed out to PLO leader Yasser Arafat that the summit will be the final phase in the Sadat initiative as well as Israel's last chance. If it fails, the U.S. will take the blame and not President Sadat, after which Saudi Arabia can resume its efforts to close Arab ranks and formulate a common strategy to Israel." In response to rumors of a separate peace, Saudi strongman Prince Fahd said, "Under no circumstances will Saudi Arabia tolerate a bilateral Egyptian-Israeli deal."

Finally, Egyptian President Sadat in an Aug. 23 speech flatly rejected Begin's proposed "partial permanent peace" and said: "I shall work for an overall peace based on justice, and there is absolutely no room there for partial solutions or separate settlements or a third disengagement agreement."

—Mary Jane Coates

Chicago Tribune: Lebanese Rightist Seeks Begin's Help

The following are excerpts of an account of the Israeli cabinet's meeting with Camille Chamoun. The story was published Aug. 24 in the Chicago Tribune and filed from Tel Aviv by Jonathan Broder.

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his top ministers met in secret early Wednesday with Lebanese Phalangist leader Camille Chamoun in Jerusalem to discuss an urgent appeal for Israeli assistance to beleaguered Christians in Beirut, a high government source told the Tribune Wednesday.

The source said Chamoun, one of two Israeli-backed Phalangist leaders in Lebanon, had requested the crucial meeting and was flown Tuesday by helicopter from the Christian stronghold of Jounieh, north of Beirut, to an Israeli gunboat off the Lebanese coast.

The gunboat brought Chamoun to Israel, the source said, where another helicopter brought him to Begin's official Jerusalem residence after midnight.

Chamoun told Begin, Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, Defense Minister Ezer Weizman and Chief of

Staff Lt. Gen. Rafael Eitan that Syrian peace keeping forces in Lebanon were planning a decisive attack against Christians in Beirut in the near future, the source said.

The leader of the right-wing Phalangists apparently asked the Israelis not to abandon their Christian Lebanese allies.

But with the Camp David Middle East summit only two weeks away, Begin told Chamoun that Israel had to maintain a low profile in the interest of a comprehensive peace settlement. The source added that Begin advised Chamoun to "hold on" until the Camp David talks had started Sept. 5.

The Syrians began an offensive against the Christians in Lebanon two months ago to bring the Phalangist militias under Syria's peacekeeping authority. The Christians, backed by Israel, have resisted the Syrians in the Lebanese capital and in the south, where Christian villagers are ruling themselves independently of Beirut.

Israel sent warplanes over Beirut Tuesday in an apparent reminder to the Syrians of its support for the Phalangists.

The meeting at Begin's home lasted more than three hours. Then the ministers and the chief of staff left and declined comment to newsmen.

At the same time, a car with curtains tightly drawn across its windows sped off from a side entrance to the Prime Minister's house.

A government spokesman confirmed a late night session between Begin, his ministers, and Eitan, but denied knowledge of Chamoun's attendance.

In the past, Israeli leaders have expressed concern that the Lebanese Christian community in Beirut will be annihilated if Syrian peacekeeping forces renew their shelling.

Mexico Expropriates Latifundios

Taking on the enemies of oil and nuclear development

With less than two weeks to go before his second State of the Union address, Mexican President José Lopez Portillo has given a preview of what his strategy for the coming year will be. Breaking the traditional government silence which precedes the presidential State of the Union address, Lopez Portillo issued a decree ordering the expropriation of a 12,000-acre latifundio owned by the powerful Santos family.

While the actual amount of land involved is not great, the expropriation represents a declaration of war by Lopez Portillo's government against the latifundists and their allies in banking, business, and political layers. Traditionally the latifundists have

been at the center of the oligarchic network, and Santos, a former governor of San Luis Potosi, is known throughout Mexico as *the* leading latifundist. A private army of 700 men protects his property, and since 1940 several Mexican Presidents who have threatened to expropriate his latifundios have backed off rather than risk a bloody and potentially explosive confrontation.

Moreover, since the action against Santos, the government has followed through with further, politically targeted expropriations. On Aug. 22 the Agrarian Reform Ministry announced the expropriation of land owned by Robles Martinez, a